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CONTENT

PAGE

Factors Influencing Attitude of Teacher Librarians Towards Information Technology In Kaduna State Gwari, H.W., Esew, M., Goshie, R.W. & Jimada, A.	1
Nigeria International Book Fair: An Overview Abdullahi, I.M. and Olowu, L.T.	14
Learning Through Peer Informal Social Interaction: A Focus On Archives And Records Management Students Abdulkarim, A.B., Nafiu, S.A., Aliyu, A., Kolo, B.M. and Lawal, B.	26
Appraisal Of Availability And Access To Information On Socio-Economic Development Of Fulani Nomads In Nasarawa State Of Nigeria Yusuf, S.	33
Filing Of Patients' Records In The Hospital: An Over View Yamusa, A.A., Abdulkarim, A.B., Lawal, B., Aliyu, A. and Suleiman, I.	46
Engaging Library And Information Professionals Educational Development Through Technology Enabled E-Learning Programmes Surakat, F. and Owokunle, B.	51
Why Must LIS Graduate Explore Numerous Research And Philosophical Perspectives? Kasa, M.G., Quadir, O.R. and Mohammed, F.	60
Contributions of Entrepreneurship Education For Self Reliance In Library And Information Technology Surakat, F.	74
The Changing Phase Of Nigerian Libraries To Knowledge Society Sunday, G., Odeh, S.E., Ejila, O. and Danlami, J.	89
Influence of Search Skills On Web Information Retrieval Task Among Academic Staff And Students In Nigerian Universities Abdulkadir, A. and Mohammed, Z.	99

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LEARNING THROUGH PEER INFORMAL SOCIAL INTERACTION: A FOCUS ON ARCHIVES AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper discussed learning through peer informal social interaction: a focus on archives and records management students. The paper showed that archives and records management students are the trainees in archives and records management discipline. The paper explained Peer informal social interaction as a process through which ideas are shared between two or more individuals. Learning was defined as a change in behavior derived from experiences acquired. The paper revealed that peer informal social interaction enables students to interact with their colleagues leading to the acquisition of new ideas that enable them understand their field of studies. The paper concluded that archives and records management as a discipline can be well understood by students undertaking the programme through peer informal social interaction as a learning method.

INTRODUCTION

Peer informal social interaction is an important way of learning. Individuals that participate in this interaction learn from one another during the interaction. Jain and Kapoor (2012) argued that peer informal social interaction has

positive effect on the performance of students. Legg and McCaslin (2015) showed that interaction among peers in school system is an essential part of the learning process that influences the lifelong learning habits of students.

Learning Through Peer Informal Social Interaction

Peer informal social interaction in school system comprises students that understand what is being taught to them better than other students, during informal social interaction. Students that understand better than others in school help the weak ones during peer informal social interaction in order to understand what has been taught to them (Nick and Harwood, 2014). As a result of peer informal social interaction, many students understand what had been taught to them in the class from their peers better than in the formal classroom.

Peer informal social interaction is an avenue of learning. Kalpana (2014) argued that informal social interaction where a group of peers are involved enables the peers to construct meaning from their interaction. Also, Cushman (2011) submitted that the interaction that takes place among peers in school system influences their learning.

It is observed that Archives and Records Management Students find it difficult in terms of searching, synthesizing and comprehending literature in their discipline in the course of their course work and research. Information is needed in order to overcome this difficulty (Ingwersen, 2001). Nick and Harwood (2014) established that through peer informal social interaction, new information between or among individuals that helps such individuals to solve their problems is acquired. It is against this observation that the researchers intends to write this paper in order to re-emphasises the place of peer informal social interaction as

information seeking avenue focusing on Archives and Records Management Students.

Archives and Records Management Students

Archives and records management students are the trainees who receive knowledge and skills in archives and records management. They are expected to become specialists in the field both in theory and practice.

The programme is run in the Department of Library and Information Science Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and the Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies University of Ibadan. Through the programme, students are taught the basic knowledge of records and archival management. This includes life-cycle management of records which starts from generation/receives stage, following through distribution stage, use stage, maintenance stage to disposition stage.

Concept of Peer Informal Social Interaction

Peer informal social interaction is a process through which ideas are shared between two or more individuals. In school system, it takes place between two or more students. Peer informal social interaction promotes active learning which could lead to the understanding of the concept under discussion as well as development of the students' cognitive domain and self confidence. Discussion among peers such as students eliminates fear, tension etc. and develops courage them. Peer informal social interaction can be carried out at the

convenience and whenever. Peer informal social interaction tends to favour weak students as they are carried along during the informal social interaction. Green et al. (2015) asserted that during peer informal social interaction, weak students are carried in the interaction and makes them understand the issue under discussion.

Peer informal social interaction can be in forms of peer tutoring, small group discussion, peer debating, students group assignment among others. Peer tutoring takes place in form of tutorial. Peer tutoring is a situation through which an individual teaches others a particular subject, concept, topic etc. For example, in schools such as secondary schools, colleges of education, polytechnics, colleges of agriculture, universities, and the rest, students carry out peer informal social interaction in order to have a better understanding of what has been taught to them in the formal class situation. This is done to have a good performance at the end of each semester or the programme.

During small group discussion, every member of the group contributes to the subject or topic under discussion. Kalpana (2014) maintained that small group discussion carry out by the students helps them in understanding the subject or topic as weak students learn from their peers who understand the subject or topic better.

Another learning activity that students engage themselves in is peer debating. Peer debating is a type of peer informal social

interaction in which students learn from one another through exchange of ideas. Cushman (2011) opined that debate makes students learn from their peers through knowledge dissemination at the debate.

Furthermore, students learn a lot during group assignment with their peers. During this activity, weak students learn from other students who understand the subject or course better. Also students demonstrate different ways of solving a particular problem as their understanding and solving a particular problem differs, every member of the group learn from one another.

Learning through peer informal social interaction that leads to good performance of students was reported by scholars. For example, Kalpana (2014) established that informal social interaction where peers share their knowledge enables them to construct meaning on a particular subject or course of study. This leads to good understanding of the subject or course that in turn leads to good performance of students in their examinations. Similarly, Cushman (2011) agreed that through peer informal social interaction, students achieve good understanding of the subjects and courses they study. This understanding leads to good performance in their examinations.

Concept of Learning

Learning is a continuous process in human life. It takes place everywhere human beings are found (Davidson 2014). Cherry (2015) defined learning as a change in

behavior as a result of experiences acquired. Learning results in modifying human behavior. For example, human thinking, walking, eating, drinking among other are modified as a result of knowledge acquired through learning. Yeager and Henderson (2014) asserted that learning helps individuals in achieving personal fulfilling career.

In school situation, students engage themselves in many activities in order to deepen their understanding for instance reading in the classroom, going to the library to search for information, engagement in group activities such as assignment, experiment, discussion among others. Tasmajian (2015) asserted that peer interaction in school situation promotes effective learning. This means as students interact with their peers information is exchanged leading to learning of new concepts from one another among the students.

Learning takes place as a result of experiences acquired by individuals. For example, in school system, students gather experiences as a result of day-to-day activities that take place in the school. These activities include attending classroom, group discussion, peer tutoring, informal mentoring etc. Cherry (2015) maintained that as a result of the experience gathered by the students, their behavior is affected. For example, a student may have poor commitment to group discussion, but if that student participates in group discussion many times and experiences the benefits, he becomes committed to group discussions.

Learning is an important task that takes place in the society. It is a technique through which an individual acquires new information that adds to existing knowledge. Learning takes place through several methods. For example, Jackson (2012) held that individual learns through engagement method, spaced learning method among others. Engagement method is a situation where by individuals participate in learning activities, while spaced learning has to do with learning for some minutes and going to rest then coming back and continue with the learning task.

Moreover, Young (2013) maintained that learning takes place through methods such as reading method, practicing method, elaborative interrogation, imagery text method and the rest. Similarly, (Kalpana, 2014; Tucker, 2015) believed that small group discussion is another method of learning. In this situation, students gather themselves and discuss what has been taught to them in the formal classroom setting. This method helps the learners in understanding the subject or topic under discussion. The method also helps the learners to understand the complex part of the subject or topic.

Another learning method as established by Corbett (2014) is peer debating. Peer debating is a learning method in which students express their understanding on a particular issue. The method stimulates students' critical thinking and makes the students participate actively in the social group learning. Students learn a lot from their peers during this learning method thereby

improving their performance on the subject or course on which the debate is carried out.

Peer Informal Social Interaction As A Learning Method

In school system, students interact with their colleagues in order to get new ideas that will enable them to understand their field of studies during their learning commitment. This type of interaction is called peer informal social interaction. Students' commitment during peer informal social interaction determines their performance. Students who commit themselves to learning by being punctual in attending peer tutorials, small group discussion among others learn a lot. As a result of this commitment towards learning, students perform better in their examinations. This commitment leads to a learning that in turn results to one's success in the school (Chen, 2014).

Many students record poor academic performance as a result of poor commitment to learning. For example, parts of commitment to learning include participation in group assignment, group discussion and the rest. In a situation whereby a student does not commit him or herself to these activities, there is high tendency that he or she will record poor performance in the

course of his or her study. Sukati and Rastogi (2014) established that poor performance of students is considered unsatisfactory. This is because it leads to delay in graduation, withdrawal from the programme etc.

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature reviewed in this paper, it is found out that social interaction is an important avenue of learning. The paper concluded that Archives and Records Management as a discipline can be well understood by students undertaking the programme through peer informal social interaction as a learning method. This method can be carried out between two or more students.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that for Archives and Records Management students to understand their course effectively, information seeking through peer informal social interaction is encouraged. This should be done between two or more students. When these students face a particular problem and they try to solve the problem independently and fail, they need information from their colleagues through peer informal social interaction as a learning method.

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